



Learn English Through Stories

H Series

H16

**Adapted and modified by
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Kailash Chowdhary's Jewel

By Satyajit Ray

Part 2

All of us got up. 'The stone is kept in the wardrobe in my bedroom.' Mr Chowdhury said. We followed him upstairs. A marble staircase went up to the first floor, ending at one end of a long, dark corridor. There were rooms on either side of the corridor. I did not actually count them, but at a guess there were at least ten rooms. Some of them were locked. There was no one in sight. The slightest noise sounded unnaturally loud in the eerie silence. I began to feel uneasy.

Mr Chowdhury's bedroom was the last one on the right. When we were more or less half way down the corridor, I suddenly realized that the door to one of the rooms was ajar. Through a small gap, a very old man was peering out, craning his neck to look at us. His eyes were dimmed with age, but as we got closer, I was shocked to notice the expression in them. The old man was staring with murder in his eyes. But he said nothing. I now felt positively scared.

'That's my father,' Mr Chowdhury explained hurriedly, continuing to walk. 'I told you he was senile, didn't I? He keeps peeping out of doors and windows. And he thinks everyone neglects him. That's why he looks so cross most of the time. But I can assure you every effort is made to make sure he's all right.'

The bedroom had a huge, high bed, and the wardrobe was next to it. Mr Chowdhury opened it, pulled out a drawer and took out a small, blue velvet box from it. 'I bought this box from a jeweller just to keep the stone in it,' he informed us, and opened it. A glittering stone lay inside, about the size of a litchi, radiating a greenish-blue light.

'This is a blue beryl. It's usually found in Brazil. There cannot be many of these in India, and certainly none of this size. I know that for a fact.'

Feluda picked up the stone, held it between his forefinger and thumb and looked closely at it for a few moments before returning it to its owner. Mr Chowdhury put it back in the drawer, then took out his wallet from his pocket. 'This is an advance payment,' he said, offering five crisp ten-rupee notes. 'I'll pay you the rest when this business is cleared up. All right?'

'Thank you,' said Feluda, accepting the money. This was the first time I saw him actually being paid for his services.

'I will need that note you were sent, and I'd like to speak to your nephew, please,' Feluda said, as we climbed down the stairs. The phone in the drawing room started ringing just as we reached the last step. Mr Chowdhury went quickly to answer it, leaving us behind. 'Hello!' we heard him say. This was followed by silence.

When we entered the drawing room a few seconds later, Mr Chowdhury replaced the receiver and sat down quickly, looking pale and frightened. 'It. . . It was that same voice!' he whispered.

'What did it say?'

'It simply repeated the same threat, but this time it was more specific. He actually said he wanted what I had found in an abandoned temple.'

'Did he say anything else?'

'No.'

'And you didn't recognize the voice?'

'No, all I can say is that it was a most unpleasant voice. Maybe you'd like to think again about taking on this case?'

Feluda smiled. 'I have finished thinking,' he replied.

We left the drawing room soon after this and made our way to the room of Mr Chowdhury's nephew, Abanish Babu. We found him closely examining something on a table with a magnifying glass. As we entered the room, he swiftly covered the object with one hand and got to his feet.

'Come in, come in!' he invited.

'I can see that you are very interested in stamps,' Feluda remarked. Abanish Babu's eyes lit up. 'Yes, sir. That's my only interest in life, my only passion. All I ever think of are stamps!'

'Do you specialize in any one country, or do you collect stamps from all over the world?'

'I used to collect them from wherever they happened to be, but of late I've started to concentrate on India. I had to sift through hundreds of old letters to get them.'

'Did you find anything good?'

'Good? Good?' Abanish Babu began to look ecstatic. 'Are you interested in this subject? Will you understand if I explain?'

'Try me,' Feluda smiled, 'I don't claim to be an expert, but like most other people, I was once keen on collecting stamps, and dreamt of acquiring the

famous ones. You know, the one-penny stamp from the Cape of Good Hope, the two-penny from Mauritius and the 1856 ones from British Guyana. Ten years ago their price was in the region of a hundred thousand rupees. Now they must be worth a lot more.'

Abanish Babu grew even more excited. 'Well then,' he said with gleaming eyes, 'well then, I'm sure you'd understand. I'd like to show you something. Here it is.' He took his hand off the table and revealed the object he had been hiding. It turned out to be a very old stamp, detached from an envelope. Its original colour must have been green, but it had faded almost completely. Abanish Babu passed it to Feluda.

'What?

What can you see?' he asked eagerly.

'An Indian stamp, about a hundred years old. It has a picture of Queen Victoria. I've seen such stamps before.'

'Have you? Yes, I'm sure you have. Now then, take another look through this magnifying glass.'

Feluda peered through the proffered glass.

'Now what do you see, eh?' Abanish Babu asked anxiously.

'There is a printing error.'

'Exactly!'

'The word is obviously POSTAGE, but instead of a "G", they printed a "C".'

Abanish Babu took the stamp back. 'Do you know how much that stamp is worth because of that error?'

'How much?'

'Twenty thousand.'

'What!'

'Yes, sir. I've checked with the authorities in UK. The catalogue does not mention the error. I was the first person to find it.'

'Congratulations! But . . . er . . . I wanted to discuss something else with you, Abanish Babu. I mean, something other than stamps.'

'Yes?'

'Your uncle—Kailash Chowdhury — has a valuable jewel. Are you aware of that?'

Abanish Babu had to think for a few moments before replying, 'Oh yes, yes. I did hear about it. I know nothing about its value, but it's supposed to be "lucky", or so my uncle said. Please forgive me, Mr Mitter, but of late I have been able to pay no attention to anything except my stamps.'

'How long have you lived in this house?'

'For the last five years. I moved here soon after my father died.'

'Do you get on with your uncle?'

'Which one do you mean? I have two uncles. One of them lives abroad.'

'Oh? I was speaking of Kailash Babu.'

'I see. Well, he is a very nice man, but . . .'

'But what?'

Abanish Babu frowned. 'For the last few days . . . he's been sort of . . . different.'

'How do you mean? When did you first notice this?'

'Two or three days ago. I told him about this stamp, but he paid no attention at all. Normally, he takes a great deal of interest. Besides, some of his old habits seem to be changing.'

'How?'

'He used to take a walk in the garden every morning before breakfast. He hasn't done that for the last couple of days. In fact, he gets up quite late. Maybe he hasn't been sleeping well.'

'Do you have any particular reason to say this?'

'Yes. My bedroom is on the ground floor. The room directly above mine is my uncle's. I have heard him pacing in the middle of the night. I've even heard his voice. I think he was having an argument.'

'An argument? With whom?'

'Probably Grandfather. Who else could it be? I've even heard footsteps going up and coming down the stairs. One night, I got up and went to the bottom of the stairs to see what was going on. I saw my uncle coming down from the roof, with a gun in his hand.'

'What time would that have been?'

'Around two o'clock in the morning, I should think.'

'What's there on the roof?'

'Nothing except a small attic. It was full of old papers and letters, but I took those away a month ago.'

Feluda rose. I could see he had no further questions to ask.

Abanish Babu said, 'Why did you ask me all this?'

Feluda smiled. 'You uncle has a lot on his mind at this moment. But you don't have to worry about it. Once things get sorted out, I'll come and have a look at your stamps. All right?'

We returned to the drawing room to say good-bye to Mr Chowdhury.

'I cannot guarantee anything, obviously, but I would like to say one thing,' Feluda told him. 'Please stop worrying and leave everything to me. Try to sleep at night. Take a sleeping pill, if necessary; and please do not go up to the roof. The houses in your lane are so close to one another that, for all we know, your enemy might be hiding on the roof of the house next door to keep an eye on you. If that is the cast, he may well jump across and attack you.'

'You think so? I did go up to the roof one night, but I took my gun with me. I'd heard a strange noise, you see. But I couldn't see anyone.'

'I hope you always keep your gun handy?'

'Oh yes. But mental tension and anxiety can often affect one's aim. If this business isn't cleared up soon, God knows what's going to happen to mine.'

2. Grammar Page

By (2)

We say that 'something is done by ...' (passive):

Have you ever been bitten **by** a dog? Yes, It was a small dog

The programme was watched by millions of people.

Compare **by** and **with**:

The door must have been opened **with** a key. (not by a key). (= somebody used a key to open it)

The door must have been opened by somebody with a key.

Data was analysed **by** the statistician.

Data was analysed **with** a computer software.

We say: a play **by** Shakespeare, a painting **by** Rembrandt, a novel **by** Sudha Murty, etc.

Have you read any poems **by** Shakespeare?

'Who is this painting **by**? Picasso?' 'I have no idea.'

By also means 'next to / beside':

The light switch is by the door. Come and sit by me. (= next to me)

You can also use by to show the difference between two things:

Banta's salary has increased by eleven per cent.

(= it's now eleven per cent more than before)

Richard won the race by five metres.

(= he was five metres in front of the other runners)

Exercise

1. Complete these sentences about books, paintings etc. Choose from the box.

by mosquitoes by one of our players by lightning by Beethoven
by a strange noise by Leonardo da Vinci by a professional photographer

1. I was woken up in the night by
2. These pictures were taken
3. I hate getting bitten
4. 'Mona Lisa' is a famous painting
5. We lost the game because of a mistake
6. The plane was damaged..... , but landed safely.
7. This music is , but I can't remember what it's called.

2. Put in by, in, on or with.

1. Have you ever been bitten a dog?
2. We managed to put the fire out..... a fire extinguisher.
3. Who's that man standingthe window?
4. Do you travel muchbus?
5. We travelled..... my friend's car because it is larger and more comfortable than mine.
6. It was only..... accident that I discovered the error.
7. These pictures were taken a very good camera.
8. My friends live in a beautiful house..... the sea.
9. There were only a few people the plane. It was almost empty.
10. The new railway line will reduce the journey time two hours (from five hours to three).
11. There was a small table the bed a lamp and a clock it

Answers

1. Complete these sentences about books, paintings etc. Choose from the box.

by mosquitoes by one of our players by lightning by Beethoven
by a strange noise by Leonardo da Vinci by a professional photographer

1. I was woken up in the night **by a strange noise**.
2. These pictures were taken **by a professional photographer**.
3. I hate getting bitten **by mosquitoes**.
4. 'Mona Lisa' is a famous painting **by Leonardo da Vinci**.
5. We lost the game because of a mistake **by one of our players**.
6. The plane was damaged **by lightning**, but landed safely.
7. This music is **by Beethoven**, but I can't remember what it's called.

2. Put in **by**, **in**, **on** or **with**.

1. Have you ever been bitten **by** a dog?
2. We managed to put the fire out **with** a fire extinguisher.
3. Who's that man standing **by** the window?
4. Do you travel much **by** bus?
5. We travelled **in** my friend's car because it is larger and more comfortable than mine.
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9. There were only a few people **on** the plane. It was almost empty.
10. The new railway line will reduce the journey time **by** two hours (from five hours to three).
11. There was a small table **by** the bed **with** a lamp and a clock **on** it.